

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1950.

All Items - "C" Series.

Index numbers of retail prices of all items ("C" Series) - with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000 - for the December quarter, 1950, with figures for September quarter, 1950, for comparison (in brackets), were:- Brisbane, 1546 (1482); Toowoomba, 1562 (1496); Rockhampton, 1577 (1497); Townsville, 1595 (1528); Bundaberg, 1548 (1471); and Warwick, 1533 (1474).

The rise in retail prices in Brisbane in the December quarter of 1950 (as measured by the "C" Series index number) was 4.3 per cent. This was the highest quarterly increase ever recorded for the "C" Series index. The previous highest rise was 3.7 per cent. in the September quarter of 1936. The December quarter rise brought the total rise in the year 1950 to 11.0 per cent., thus equalling the previous highest rise for twelve months which occurred during the period ended December, 1948. Nearly half of the aggregate rise in the quarter just completed was due to an increase in prices of food and groceries, which rose by 5.3 per cent. This increase had only been exceeded twice since the end of the war (5.8 per cent. in March quarter, 1948, and 5.6 per cent. in December quarter, 1948). Clothing and footwear increased by 4.6 per cent., which was a little above the quarterly average increase since June, 1939. The average increase for clothing and footwear in the other Queensland cities from which data are obtained was 4.4 per cent. All of these five cities showed higher increases for food and grocery items than in the preceding quarter. Miscellaneous items increased in Brisbane by 4.0 per cent., which was the highest increase since June, 1939, apart from a rise of 4.7 per cent. in June quarter, 1948.

The indexes show the following percentage increases when compared with those for the periods shown.

Retail Price Index, "C" Series, Percentage Increases,December Quarter, 1950.

City.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From December Quarter, 1949.	From September Quarter, 1950.
Brisbane	79.1	11.0	4.3
Toowoomba	83.5	10.9	4.4
Rockhampton	83.2	12.7	5.3
Townsville	74.9	10.5	4.4
Bundaberg	84.1	12.7	5.2
Warwick	86.5	10.3	4.0

Food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and the miscellaneous group of items comprising household drapery and hardware, fuel, light, fares, etc., have shown the following percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases,December Quarter, 1950.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1950.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1950.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1950.
Brisbane ..	81.2	5.3	184.1	4.6	49.1	4.0
Toowoomba ..	93.4	5.9	182.0	4.2	48.3	4.5
Rockhampton	85.3	8.4	177.8	4.0	51.3	4.0
Townsville	71.2	4.3	183.2	5.3	53.0	5.9
Bundaberg ..	81.5	8.0	183.2	4.9	47.0	3.1
Warwick ..	86.4	5.8	180.2	3.7	49.2	3.7

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Food and Groceries.

As shown in the previous table, food prices increased, during the quarter, in the six cities included in the survey by amounts ranging from 4.3 per cent. in Townsville to 8.4 per cent. in Rockhampton.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index remained stationary in Townsville, Bundaberg, and Warwick, but increased in Brisbane (1.6 per cent.), Toowoomba (1.0 per cent.), and Rockhampton (1.7 per cent.).

Clothing, Footwear, and Miscellaneous Items.

Considerable increases were recorded in the prices of cotton frocks, straw hats, and women's footwear.

The miscellaneous items index increased by amounts ranging from 3.1 per cent. in Bundaberg to 5.9 per cent. in Townsville.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required, in December quarter, 1950, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.			
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0
Rockhampton	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	4 $\frac{1}{2}$				19	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$		
Townsville	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	1	19	4		1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	
Bundaberg ..	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$		
Warwick ..		19	10	1	0	4	17	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	19	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	1			

In relation to Brisbane prices, the cost of all items together increased during the quarter in Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Bundaberg, but decreased in Warwick, and retained the same level in Townsville which remained the dearest city out of the six for which data are collected.

Food and grocery prices in provincial cities remained dearer than in Brisbane. The excess over Brisbane prices decreased in Townsville but increased in the other four cities for which the index number is calculated. Large price increases during the quarter in Rockhampton and Bundaberg made food and groceries in these cities dearer than in Townsville for the first time on record.

In comparison with Brisbane, relative prices of clothing and footwear increased during the quarter in Townsville and Bundaberg, but decreased in Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Warwick.

Prices of miscellaneous items in the provincial cities covered by the survey remained dearer than in Brisbane. Largest variation recorded since the previous quarter was in Townsville, where miscellaneous items costing £1 in Brisbane would have cost £1 1s. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., compared with £1 1s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. during the September quarter.

State Basic Wage Rates in Various Cities.

The first column of the following table shows, for the December quarter of 1950, the retail price index number ("C" Series) for Brisbane, for four of the other principal cities of Queensland for which figures are available, and for the other five capital cities of Australia. The next two columns show the basic wage rates, for males and females, as prescribed by the appropriate State industrial authorities, for each city at 31st December, 1950. These columns are followed by columns showing the amounts which would have been required in Brisbane to provide a standard of real purchasing power equivalent to that provided by the respective State basic wages in each of the cities shown. The differences between these amounts and the actual State basic wage rates for Brisbane, as shown in the final columns, show the margin of advantage in purchasing power enjoyed by Brisbane basic wage earners over basic wage earners in each of the other cities. Minus (-) figures in the last columns indicate that the local basic wage in a particular city provided a higher level of real purchasing power than did the Brisbane basic wage in Brisbane. Thus the State basic wage for males in Brisbane had a lower real value than did the corresponding wages for Townsville and Perth. Its real value was about the same as was provided by the wages for Bundaberg and Hobart, but more than those for the other five cities shown. For females, the State award for Brisbane provided more purchasing power than the rate awarded in Perth, and slightly more than the rates in Toowoomba and Rockhampton. It was worth a little less than the rate for Townsville, and much less than the rates for females in the other four capital cities.

Comparison of Purchasing Powers of Basic Wages of State Industrial Authorities,

December, 1950.

City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series), 4th Qtr., 1950.	Basic Wage at 31.12.50.		Equivalent of Local Basic Wage at Brisbane Prices.		Extra Purchasing Power of Brisbane Basic Wage.	
		Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.
Brisbane ..	1546	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Toowoomba	1562	7 14 0	5 2 6	7 14 0	5 2 6	-	-
Rockhampton	1577	7 14 0	5 2 6	7 11 0	5 0 6	3 0	2 0
Townsville	1595	8 4 0	5 7 6	7 19 0	5 4 2	-5 0	-1 8
Bundaberg	1548	7 14 0	5 2 6	7 13 10	5 2 4	0 2	0 2
Sydney ..	1680	8 5 0	6 3 6	7 11 10	5 13 8	2 2	-11 2
Melbourne	1646	8 2 0 ^a	6 1 6 ^a	7 12 2	5 14 1	1 10	-11 7
Adelaide ..	1608	7 18 0	5 13 6	7 11 11	5 13 11	2 1	-11 5
Perth ..	1607	8 6 6	4 14 1	8 0 2	4 10 6	-6 2	12 0
Hobart ..	1601	8 0 0 ^a	6 0 0 ^a	7 14 6	5 15 11	-0 6	-13 5

^a No State wage is declared. As the Commonwealth rate is followed to a large extent, Commonwealth rates are shown.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

Following the publication of the index numbers for the December quarter, 1950, the basic wage rates of the Commonwealth Court were automatically adjusted from 1st February, 1951. The new rates and the amounts of adjustments are shown in the next table, together with the latest basic wage rates for males and females declared by the various State industrial authorities, and the dates from which they operated.

Basic Wage Rates, March Quarter, 1951.

Capital City.	Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.					
	Males. ^a	Increase on Previous Rate.		Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.			
Brisbane ..	£ 7 19 0	5 0		£ 7 19 0	£ 5 5 6	5.	2.	51	
Sydney ..	8 13 0	8 0		8 13 0	6 9 6	1.	2.	51	^b
Melbourne ..	8 10 0	8 0	(8 10 0)		a	(1.	2.	51)	
Adelaide ..	8 6 0	8 0	8 6 0	6 4 6		1.	2.	51	
Perth ..	8 6 0	6 0	8 12 11	4 17 9		29.	1.	51	
Hobart ..	8 5 0	5 0	(8 5 0)	a		(1.	2.	51)	

^a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

^b No State wage declared, but rate shown is that of Commonwealth Court which is followed to a large extent.

As recorded in Bulletin No. 30 of 1950, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in October, 1950, increased its basic wage rate for males by £1 per week, and decided to equalise the existing "prosperity" loadings at 6s. in all States. (Previously the loadings had been 6s. in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, and 4s. in the other three States.) On 24th November, 1950, the Court made a further announcement clarifying the matter. It decided that the "prosperity" loading should be incorporated in the new wage rates at 5s. in all States, and, by the introduction of a new series of "Court" Index Numbers, the whole basic wage should be varied with "cost of living" changes. (Previously only the "needs" portion of the wage had been subject to "cost of living" adjustments: "prosperity" loadings had remained unchanged at 6s. and 4s. in the respective States.) The result of the November announcement was that the basic wage for males was increased by 19s. in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, and 21s. in Adelaide, Perth, and Hobart. Female rates were fixed at 75 per cent. of male rates. The new rates for males which became operative from 1st December, 1950, were:- Brisbane, £7 14s. Od.; Sydney, £8 5s. Od.; Melbourne, £8 2s. Od.; Adelaide, £7 18s. Od.; Perth, £8 0s. Od.; Hobart, £8 0s. Od. As from 1st February, 1951, the new rates became subject to automatic "cost of living" adjustments in accordance with the new "Court Series" Index Numbers, and the new rates are shown in the preceding table.

State Industrial Courts, following the Commonwealth Court's new declaration, adjusted their basic wage rates as follows:- Brisbane, males £7 14s. Od., females £5 2s. 6d., to operate from 7th December, 1950; Adelaide, males £7 18s. Od., females £5 18s. 6d., to operate from 1st December, 1950; and Perth, males £8 6s. 6d., females £4 14s 1d., to operate from 18th December, 1950. The New South Wales Court adopted the new Commonwealth rates for males and females, and in Victoria and Tasmania no State basic wage is declared. The above State Courts' rates were varied as shown in the preceding table following the publication of the retail prices indexes for the December quarter, 1950.

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Table No. 1 - The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.
 (Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1950.	Quarter Ended -					
				Decr., 1949.	March, 1950.	June, 1950.	Sept., 1950.	Decr., 1950.	
Brisbane	863	1079	1472	1393	1414	1446	1482	1546
Toowoomba	851	1092	1486	1408	1429	1455	1496	1562
Rockhampton	861	1084	1491	1399	1428	1461	1497	1577
Townsville	912	1119	1525	1444	1469	1506	1528	1595
Bundaberg	841	1059	1464	1374	1401	1437	1471	1548
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	1082	1478	1397	1419	1451	1487	1553
Warwick	822	1073	1461	1390	1406	1432	1474	1533

Table No. 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.
 (Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1950.	Quarter Ended -					
				Decr., 1949.	March, 1950.	June, 1950.	Sept., 1950.	Decr., 1950.	
Brisbane	856	971	1462	1367	1402	1421	1473	1551
Toowoomba	814	1010	1480	1379	1418	1441	1486	1574
Rockhampton	895	1012	1523	1391	1444	1462	1529	1658
Townsville	955	1057	1560	1463	1499	1537	1568	1635
Bundaberg	903	1027	1515	1393	1438	1464	1517	1639
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	864	984	1476	1377	1414	1435	1485	1563
Warwick	846	1000	1484	1383	1422	1444	1491	1577

Table No. 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.
 (Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1950.	Quarter Ended -					
				Decr., 1949.	March, 1950.	June, 1950.	Sept., 1950.	Decr., 1950.	
Brisbane	829	1454	2226	2072	2099	2197	2251	2355
Toowoomba	829	1429	2223	2089	2116	2195	2244	2338
Rockhampton	845	1477	2238	2086	2124	2225	2256	2347
Townsville	840	1457	2246	2091	2124	2221	2260	2379
Bundaberg	839	1447	2252	2096	2128	2239	2264	2376
Weighted Average									
Five Towns	831	1454	2229	2076	2105	2202	2252	2356
Warwick	825	1441	2202	2077	2093	2175	2229	2312